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# T W O P E T I T I O N S T O T H E H O N O U R A B L E C O U R T O F P A R L I A M E N T I N B E H A L F E O F E P I S C O P A C Y.

ONE DELIVERED BY S<sup>r</sup> THOMAS  
ASTON from the County Palatine  
of Chester.

THE OTHER FROM THE  
Citties of L. and W.

Printed in the yeare 1641.



1938

W. H. D. S. 1900

Windsor, the old town.

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2018-04-06 11:30:00

# A PETITION DELIVERED IN TO

The Lords Spirituall and Temporall, by

Sir THOMAS ASTON, Baronet,<sup>1610</sup>

from the County Palatine of CHESTER  
concerning EPISCOPACIE.

To the High and Honorable Court of  
PARLIAMENT.

The Nobility, Knights, Gentry, Ministers,  
Free-Holders, and Inhabitants of the  
County Palatine of Chester, whose  
names are subscribed in the  
severall Schedules here-  
unto annexed.

Humbly shew,

**T**hat whereas divers Petitions  
have lately been carried about  
this County, against the present  
forme of Church-Government,  
(and the hands of many persons of ordina-  
ry quality solicited to the same, with pre-  
tence to be presented to this Honorable

Assembly:) which we conceiving not so much to ayme at reformation as absolute innovation of Government, & such as must give a great advantage to the Adversaries of our Religion, We held it our duty to dis-avow them all.

And humbly pray, that We incurre no miscensure, if any such clamours have (without our privity) assum'd the name of the County.

We, as others, are sensible of the common Grievances of the Kingdome, & have just cause to rejoice at, and acknowledge with thankfulness, the pious care which is already taken for the suppressing of the growth of Popery, the better supply of able Ministers, and the removing of all Innovation; and We doubt not but in your great Wisedomies, you will regulate the rigour of Ecclesiastical Courts, to suit with the temper of our lawes, and the nature of Free-men.

Yet when We consider, that Bishops were instituted in the time of the Apostles;

Thas

That they were the great lights of the Church in all the first generall Councells; That so many of them sowed the seeds of Religion in their bloods, and rescued Christianity from utter extirpation in the Primitive Heathen persecutions; That to them we owe the redemption of the purity of the Gospell. We now professe from Romish corruption; That many of them for the propagation of the truth, became glorious Martyrs; That divers of them (lately and yet living with us) have been so strong assertors of our Religion against its common enemy of Rome; And that their Government hath beene so long approved, so oft established by the Common and Statute-Lawes of this Kingdome; And as yet nothing in their doctrine (generally taught) dissonant from the Word of God, or the Articles ratified by Law: In this case to call their Government a perpetuall vassalage, an intollerable bondage; And (*primâ facie* & *inauditâ alterâ parte*) to pray the present removall of them, or (as in some of their

Petitions ) to seeke the utter dissolution  
and ruine of their Offices ( as Antichristi-  
an:) We cannot conceive to relish of justice  
or charity, nor can We joyne with them.

But on the contrary, when We consider  
the tenor of such Writings, as in the name  
of Petitions are spread amongst the Com-  
mon People; the tenents preached pub-  
liquely in Pulpits, and the contents of ma-  
ny printed Pamphlets, swarming amongst  
us; all of them dangerously exciting a dis-  
obedience to the established forme of Go-  
vernment, and their severall intimations  
of the desire of the power of the Keyes, and  
that their Congregations may execute Ec-  
clesiasticall Censures within themselves:  
We cannot but expresse our just feares, that  
their desire is to introduce an absolute Inno-  
vation of Presbyterial Government, where-  
by We, who are now governed by the Ca-  
non and Civill Lawes, dispensed by twen-  
ty-six Ordinaries (easily responsall to Par-  
liaments, for any deviation from the rule of  
Law,) conceive We should become expo-  
sed

sed to the meere arbitrary Government of a numerous Presbytery, who together with their ruling Elders will arise to neere forty thousand Church-Governours, and with their Adherents, must needs beare so great a sway in the Common-wealth, that if future inconvenience shall be found in that Government, We humbly offer to consideration, how these shall be reducible by Parliaments, how consistent with a Monarchy, and how dangerously conduicible to an Anarchy, which We have iust cause to pray against, as fearing the consequences would prove the utter losse of Learning and Lawes, which must necessarily produce an extirmination of Nobility, Gentry, and Order, if not of Religion.

With what vehemency of spirit, these things are prosecuted, and how plausibly such popular infusions spread as incline to a paritie, We held it our duty to represent to this Honorable Assenibly; And humbly pray, that some such present course be taken, as in your Wisedomes shall be thought fit,

to

to suppress the future dispersing of such dangerous discontents amongst the Common People. We having great cause to feare, that of all the distempers that at present threaten the welfare of this State, there is none more worthy the mature and grave consideration of this Honorable Assembly, then to stop the Torrent of such Spirits before they swell beyond the bounds of Government: Then We doubt not but his Maiestie persevering in his gracious inclination to heare the complaints, and relieve the grievances of his Subiects in frequent Parliaments, it will so unite the Head and the Body, so indissolubly cement the affections of his people to our Royall Soveraigne, that without any other change of Government, He can never want revenue, nor We justice.

We

We have presumed to annex a Coppy of a Petition ( or Libell ) dispersed, and certaine positions preacht in this County, which We conceive imply matter of dangerous consequence to the peace both of Church and State. All which We humbly submit to your great Judgments, praying they may be read.

And shall ever pray, &c.

Subscribed to this Petition,

Fourre Noblemen.

Knight Baronets, Knights and Esquires,  
fourescore and odde.

Divines, threescore and ten.

Gentlemen, three hundred and odde.

Freeholders and other Inhabitants, above  
six thousand.

All of the same County.

The Anti-Petition, or Answer to this, is a base  
Libell and a forgerie.

B

TO

THE HONORABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS

TO THE  
HONORABLE,  
THE  
*Knights, Cittizens, &c.*

The humble Petition of the Citties  
of L. and W.

*Humbly sheweth,*

**T**HAT whereas there hath of late a Petition subscribed by many ( who pretend to be Inhabitants of these Citties ) been delivered, received, and read in this HONORABLE House, against the ancient, present, and by Law established Government of the Church, and that not so much for the Reformation of Bishops, as for the utter subversion and extirpation of Episcopacy.

pacy it selfe; Wee whose names are underwritten, to shew there be many, and those of the better sort of the Inhabitants of these Citties otherwise and better minded, doe humbly represent unto this Honorable House, these considerations following.

I. That Episcopacy is as ancient as Christianity it selfe in this Kingdome.

II. That Bishops were the chiefe instruments in the Reformation of this Church against Popery, and afterwards the most eminent Martyrs for the Protestant Religion, and since, the best and ablest Champions for the defence of it.

III. That since the Reformation, the times have been very peaceable, happy, and glorious, notwithstanding Episcopall Government in the Church: and therefore that this Government can be no cause of our unhappinesse.

IV. We conceive that not only many Learned, but diverse other Godly persons would be much scandalled and troubled in Conscience, if the Government of Episcopacy,

pacy, conceived by them to be an Apostolick Institution, were altered: & since there is so much care taken, that no man should be offended in the least Ceremony, we hope there will be some, that such mens Consciences may not be pressed upon, in a matter of an higher nature and consequence, especially considering that this Government by Episcopacy, is not only lawfull and convenient foredification, but likewise suitable and agreeable to the Civill policie and Government of this State.

V. That this Government is lawfull it appeares by the immediate, universall & constant practise of all the Christian World, grounded upon Scripture, from the Apostles time to this last Age, for above 1500 yeares together: It being utterly incredible, if not impossible, that the whole Church for so long a time, should not discover by Gods word this Government to be unlawful, if it had been so. To which may be added, that the most learned Protestants, even in those very Churches which now are not governed

governed by Bishops, doe not only hold the Government by Episcopacy to be lawfull, but wish that they themselves might enjoy it.

Againe, that the Government by Episcopacy is not only lawfull, but convenient for edification, & as much, or more conduced to Piety and devotion then any other, it appeares, because no modest man denies, that the Primitive times were most famous for Piety, Constancy, & Perseverance in the Faith, notwithstanding more frequent and more cruell persecutions then ever have been since; and yet it is confessed, that the Church in those times was govern'd by Bishops..

Lastly, That the Government of the Church by Episcopacy, is most suitable to the frame and forme of the Civill Government here in this Kingdome, it appeares by the happy & flourishing Union of them both, for so long a time together; Whereas no man can give us an assurance, how any Church Government besides this (whereof

We have had so long an experience) will  
suit and agree with the Civill policie of  
this State. And We conceive it may be of  
dangerous consequence, for men of settled  
fortunes to hazzard their estates, by making  
so great an alteration, and venturing upon a  
new forme of Government, whereof nei-  
ther We, nor our Ancestors have had any  
tryall, or experience; especially considering  
that those, who would have Episcopacy to  
be abolished, have not yet agreed, nor ( as  
We are verily perswaded ) ever will or can  
agree upon any other common forme of  
Government to succeed in the roome of it,  
as appeares by the many different and con-  
trary draughts, and platformes they have  
made & published, according to the several  
humors and sects of those that made them.  
Whereas, seeing every great alteration in a  
Church or State, must needs be dangerous,  
it is just and reasonable that whosoever  
would introduce a *new forme* in stead of an  
*old one*, should be obliged to demonstrate  
and make it evidently appeare aforeshand,  
that

that the Government he would introduce, is proportionably so much better, then that he would abolish, as may recompence the losse we may sustaine, and may be worthy of the hazzard we must run, in abolishing the one, and in introducing and settling of the other. But this We are confident can never be done, in regard of this particular.

And therefore our humble and earnest request to this *Honorable House* is, that as well in this consideration, as all the other aforesaid, We may still injoy that Government, which most probably holds its Institution from the *Apostles*, and most certainly its plantation with our *Christian Faith* it selfe in this Kingdome, where it hath ever since flourished, and continued for many Ages without any interruption or alteration: whereby it plainly appeares, that as it is the most excellent Government in it selfe; so it is the most suitable, most agreeable, and every way most proportionable to the Civil constitutions and temper of this State. And therefore We pray and hope will always,

wayes be continued, and preserved in it & by it, notwithstanding the abuses and corruptions which in so long tract of time through the errors or negligences of men may have crept into it: Which abuses and corruptions being all of them ( what and how many soever they may be ) but meere-ly accidentall to Episcopacy ; We conceive and hope , there may be a Reformation of the one , without destruction of the other.

*Which is the bumble suit  
of  
Ten thousand thousand.*

